

Delete claims 1, 8 and 9 and substitute therefor new claims 12-14.

REMARKS

Claims 10-14 re in the application.

As a result of the foregoing amendment, claims 1, 8 and 9 have been deleted and replaced by new claims 12-14.

New claim 12 essentially is a combination of original claims 1-5. New claim 13 is a combination of original claims 6 and 7 and claim 14 is the same as original claim 9.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hohenbichler et al. (US 5,577,548) in view of Mörwald et al. (US 6,209,619), and under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hohenbichler et al., are respectfully requested.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims as rewritten are patentably distinct over the references relied on by the Examiner.

First of all, it is respectfully pointed out that the reference to Hohenbichler et al. only is directed to a method in which the strand thickness is reduced.

As described in column 6, lines 48-54, of the reference to Hohenbichler et al., the reference operates as follows:

- First of all, the operating position of all support segments after the passage of the shortest possible length of strand is adjusted,
- secondly, that position is maintained constant, and
- thirdly, should a deviation of the position of the support segments from the operating position be necessary, this deviation is again corrected after passage of the shortest possible length of strand.

Specifically, the reference to Hohenbichler et al. is directed to a process for the continuous casting of a strand in a continuous casting plant which is provided with a continuous casting mold having a discharge opening and a strand guide with rollers supporting the strand on opposite sides arranged below the discharge opening, at least those rollers associated with one side of the strand being mounted on a series of support segments which are displaceable with respect to the opposite rollers, wherein the process includes the steps of reducing the strand in

thickness after emergence from the mold in the manner that at least the support segment closest to the mold is directed to a predetermined wedge-shaped roller gap having a conicity α between the facing rollers, wherein the strand is reduced in thickness exclusively in a region in which it has a liquid core, and the support segments are directed such that the liquid tip of the liquid core always lies in a region of the strand guide within which the gap formed by the rollers is the narrowest parallel gap disregarding any adjustment following the shrinkage of the completely solidified strand.

In accordance with claim 11 of the reference, the numerical value of the adjusting speed for the reduction of the strand thickness is equal to or smaller than the quotient of the numerical value of at least half the roller pitch R in mm.

As set forth in claim 12, the value of the speed is multiplied with the value of the total roller adjustment.

In contrast, the present invention is patentably distinct over the reference because, in accordance with the present invention as claimed, the adjustment speed is computed by taking into consideration the permissible threshold value of the strand

expansion and the actual casting speed in connection with the actual billet size adjustment or in accordance with the resulting volume flow of the billet.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention is patentably distinct over his reference, even when taken in combination with the reference to Mörwald et al.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, it is submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance and such allowance is respectfully solicited.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with the application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

Respectfully submitted,

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Encl.: Amended claim 10 (clean copy; marked-up version) & new
claims 12-14

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By:

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Date: December 27, 2002

Marked-up Version of Amended Claim 10

10. (Amended) A device for [performing the method according to claim 1] changing the section of a billet of a continuous casting plant during continuous casting, the device comprising:

a first roll support and a second roll support positioned opposite one another and configured to receive a billet therebetween;

the first and second roll supports comprised of segments having rolls, wherein adjoining ones of the segments of each roll support are connected to one another by a jointed connection and wherein each one of the segments is configured to be adjustable independent of the other segments with respect to an angular position relative to the billet;

an adjusting device configured to move the segments of the first and second roll supports, wherein the adjusting devices comprises means for position control or force control.